

CHAPTER - VI

Last years of Harendra Narayan - End of Medieval Age in Cooch Behar. + 1814 - 1839

The British relations with Cooch Behar entered upon a new phase after 1814. Harendra Narayan's changed attitude of accepting British Regulations gave the British a breathing space. They were really very much disturbed at the attitude of Harendra Narayan.

British Government appreciated Macleod, the Commissioner for Cooch Behar for his success in changing Harendra Narayan's attitude without employing force. Their attitude towards the Raja also changed. They never tried to interfere in the Raja's traditional rights and powers. For the betterment of the administration of Cooch Behar, the government proposed to place Prince Shibendra Narayan in charge of all lands of Cooch Behar. They wanted monthly regularised payment of the public establishments, payment of the tribute, payment of the interest of debts made by the Raja, maintenance of the Raja's household and gradual discharge of the principal of the debt contracted by him. They, however, asked Macleod to seek for the ruler's concurrence in effecting these arrangements ⁽¹⁾. Even when it was decided that the trials of Ram Prasad should be according to the laws of Cooch Behar and also in the Raja's court, the government did not object. Though they were aware of

1. C.B.S.R. - Vol. 1, pp. 329-30.

the results of the trial in the Raja's court. After Guru Prasad's removal, question arose with regards to his replacement. Radhakrishna Lahiri persuaded the Raja to request Macleod for his appointment. But Macleod rejected the proposal and wanted to install Shibendra Narayan in charge of the financial affairs. ⁽²⁾ Shibendra Narayan was young, about eighteen years' of age and was candid and liberal. He had some knowledge about Persian and some interests of administration. He was, moreover, the immediate heir to the state. So, Macleod wanted to make the future ruler of Cooch Behar interested in the material welfare of his state and conversant with the problems of administration which Harendra Narayan lacked. To keep him away from administration would be to cripple his abilities. ⁽³⁾

Upto this time Macleod tackled the situation of Cooch Behar diplomatically. But during this time Macleod became over enthusiastic in undermining the prestige of Harendra Narayan. It was true that Harendra Narayan had a dislike for the British Regulations, but there was no proof of rebellious acts on his part. All the activities of the Raja upto this time made Macleod biased against him. Macleod believed that there was nothing impossible on the part of the capricious ruler. This suspicious attitude of the Commissioner created an awkward

2. Ibid., pp. 354-55

3. Ibid.

situation in Cooch Behar. In 1815, there was a rumour that in order to make an alliance with the Gurkhas of Nepal against the British, Harendra Narayan conspired with the Bhutia Governor at Buxa ⁽⁴⁾. The rumour at first spread from a Zinkaf. ⁽⁵⁾ This person saw Ram Singh, a faithful Sepoy of Harendra Narayan with a letter towards Chamurchi. Sometimes after this incident, this Ram Singh, being discharged by the Raja, told Macleod all about the conspiracy, without judging the truth of Ram Singh's allegation. ⁽⁶⁾ Macleod wrote to the British Government about the treacherous activity of Harendra Narayan. The Raja was not a good book of the authority ^{ies} at Calcutta but they were not in a revengeful mood (of that of) ^{like} Macleod. If the charges against Harendra Narayan proved genuine, the punishment would be the dethronement of the ruler, ⁽⁷⁾ and it was not unnatural for the British Government. But without any proper enquiry they did not want to take any action. There was no doubt that Cooch Behar had no friendly relations with Bhutan. A constant border dispute was going on between the two and it was not possible for Cooch Behar to maintain the border's security without the help of the East India Company. In that case, if Harendra Narayan wanted to make a secret alliance with the Bhutias and the Gorkhas in Nepal, then the time was ripe during the first

4. Sen, S. N. op.cit., Lett. No. 136, p. 61.

5. Ibid., p. 39.

6. Foreign consultations (Pol.) Oct., 1815.

7. Sen, S.N. op.cit., p. 39.

Anglo-Gurkha war (1814) when the British army was in a awkward position.⁽⁸⁾ But this time the victory of the British was a foregone conclusion. So the allegations of Macleod was not justified. The British government wanted genuine proof of Harendra Narayan's anti-British activity.⁽⁹⁾

Uptill now Macleod was appreciated for his policies in Cooch Behar. But during this time he tried his best to prove the Raja of Cooch Behar guilty of treacherous activities. Without waiting for authorities' instruction from Calcutta, he begun to enquire into the matter.⁽¹⁰⁾

Harendra Narayan, like other Hindu prince practised polygamy. Karindranath, one of his brother-in-law, was an employee under the Bhutan government. He was dismissed temporarily but he had a hope that if he met the Debraja of Bhutan, he would be re-instated. But Macleod came to know that Karindra did not go to Bhutan. He went to the border for making arrangement of hunting for Harendra Narayan.⁽¹¹⁾ Karindranath had his own house at Marichbari, a place near the Bhutan frontier. Macleod scented otherwise at the news of Harendra Narayan's hunting. News also came to him that Karindra was gathering force near the frontier. Moreover Harendra Narayan had handed over Maraghat to Bhutan and Chaprasis to keep watch over Karindranath. One of the

8. Ibid., p. 40.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid. p. 42.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

Chaprasi reported that a Zenkauf with Debaraja's letter came to Karindranath who would soon leave for Bhutan. Macleod posted Ensign Pigot with a band of Sepoys on the bank of the river Mansai towards the Bhutan frontier. ⁽¹³⁾ The Sepoys and Chaprasis of Macleod, after returning from Marichbari, reported that they had seen about forty persons returning with hunting materials. After enquiry, they came to know that these men were going to Bhutan, but as the place was quite unknown to them, they returned to the Rajbari (Raja's palace). There was not more than twenty five armed men with Karindranath. After their return to Cooch Behar, Macleod enquired Karindranath and his associates. His answer was evasive. Moreover, they were, to some extent, crazy. So Macleod was sure that Harendra Narayan sent Karindra Nath to obtain Bhutan's military help against the English in exchange of Maraghat. So, within no time ⁽¹⁴⁾ Macleod reported to the government at Calcutta the adventure of Karindra Nath. "From the whole of the information above detailed, it has appeared to me that the following conclusion is evidently and surely deducible that the Raja of Cooch Behar despatched Karindra Nath and his companions for Bhutan in charge of a mission, having for its express object an offer to the Bhutias of the resignation of all lands in Maraghat, and an invitation to them to descend and take immediate possession of those lands, on the condition that

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

they should grant him the aid of a large military force, to assist him in prosecuting the views, which he now unquestionably mediates, of forcibly emancipating his raj from all dependence upon the English government."⁽¹⁵⁾

But this time fortune betrayed Macleod. The authorities rebuked him for his highnandedness with regard to the ruler of Cooch Behar. The government discerns nothing in Macleod's report to apprehend anything from Harendra Narayan. Macleod sent Munsifazzalullah to the Subah of Buxaduar for the original letter. But his attempt also failed. Fazal-ullah returned with some copy of the original letters.⁽¹⁶⁾ Though these letters were comparatively in favour of Macleod,⁽¹⁷⁾ but the government took no steps.

Moreover, a Zinhaf from Bhutan had brought no satisfactory answer on the subject of the correspondence stated to have taken place between the Raja of Cooch Behar and the Soobhas of Chamurchi and Buxaduar. He stated that he could not collect any evidence that any letters had also been received.⁽¹⁸⁾ On February 24, 1816

J. Adam, Secretary to the government wrote Macleod that British government, after a careful and thorough examination of the terms of the Anglo-Cooch Behar treaty came to a decision that until and unless the king would violate the terms of the treaty, they had no

15. Ibid., pp. 42-43.

16. vide, Let. No. (Bengali) 151, 152, 153, 154.
Sen, S. N. - op.cit., pp. 183-87.

17. Ibid. p. 43.

18. Ibid., p. 43-44.

jurisdiction over the matter. Adam at the same time asked the ruler of Cooch Behar to earnestly attend to the advice of the Commissioner who would be the best chance of a successful administration. (20)

The policy of the British government was not liked by Macleod. There was no improvement in the administration of justice and police in Cooch Behar. The whole business of ~~the~~ criminal justice and police departments were suffering due to the incapacity of Radhakrishna Lahiri to perform these duties along with his own functions. The Raja was still in the hope of reinstating Guru Prasad and Ram Prasad. He gave hints to Macleod of reserving the criminal court for Guru Prasad. Of course, he himself, personally would pay more attention to its smooth functioning, and for the time being he wanted to keep the department under the charge of Radhakrishna Lahiri, the Dewan. Macleod doubted very much the Raja's sincerity to look

19. C.B.S.R., Vol. 1, pp. 97-98.

On the whole, the Resolution, which the Governor-General in Council has now formed, is to abstain from all interference except in the form of advice and representation in the unlimited management of the affairs of Cooch Behar, and to restrict the powers of the Commissioner, to the exercise of diplomatic functions only. The presence of a commissioner will still, in the judgement of His Lordship in Council, be of considerable utility in aiding the Raja with advice, in serving by his presence as a salutary check on the conduct of the Raja and of his officers, in communicating with the government and in interposing the cases of real magnitude and importance, and under special instructions for the purpose, the authority of government for the prevention of justice and oppression.

20. Ibid., p. 99.

into the affairs and clearly told him of his lack of faith in Radha Krishna's ability to control the two important departments.
(21)

Harendra Narayan and his eldest son Shibendra Narayan were not in good terms. But during this time Harendra Narayan agreed to receive prince Shibendra Narayan into favour provided he could arrange for the return of Guru Prasad as well as Ram Prasad.
(22) Prince Shivenbra Narayan approached Macleod with the request to place Ram Prasad under his security. As Ram Prasad could not be judged or penalised except by the Raja's criminal court, and as there was no certainty of his receiving due punishment at the hands of the Raja for the offence of murdering Harish Chakraborty, Macleod did not find any objection to the request of the crown Prince. As long as he stood guarantee for the man, the government had no cause for anxiety for the offender. Macleod hoped that by granting the request of the crown prince he would be able to bridge the difference
(23) between the royal father and son. So he consented.

But a under current of intrigues was soon disco-

21. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 1-6, Macleod to Govt.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

vered. Ram Prasad succeeded in influencing the Raja who declared that he would vest the former with the powers of Faujdari and Dewani Departments. Lahiri also did not set idle. His friends spread the rumour that Shivendra Narayan, in league with the British officers was planning some project harmful for the Raja's power and position. These prejudiced the mind of the Raja and as a result created distrust in the father for the son again. (24) Macleod was afraid of the inimical attitude of the Raja towards his son and the future heir. He made it a plea for effective interference of the British Government in the said affairs of Cooch Behar. "Consistently with even the modified principles of political influence now adopted the British Government might possibly deem itself justified in a recourse to such a degree of interference as may be requisite to uphold the condition of the heir of the raj." (25)

The commissioner was aggrieved at the limited interference in the administration of Cooch Behar and the practical evil arising therefrom. By limiting "the exertion of our political influence to cases of peculiar magnitude and importance" Macleod feared, the government limited the "salutary effects to be anticipated from our future control over the

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

Raja's administration." (26) He referred to the aspects of the ruler's character that turned a deaf ear to the advice of the British government. The Raja was of over-bearing nature puffed up by a group of self-seeking flatters. The "forebearing policy and the conduct of the British government towards him as past-times", and the recent management confirming to him the free and entire management of the Raj, "inflected his mind with arrogant notions respecting the extent and nature of his political independence". Macleod suspected that Harendra Narayan suffered from jealousy of British paramountcy. He referred to a prophecy current in that state that during his reign Cooch Behar would cease for ever to maintain her separate statehood. Perhaps, the ruler under the influence of the prophecy resisted any form of British interference or supervision of his affairs. The commissioner became very much disgusted with the government's policy towards Cooch Behar. He was of opinion that a mere continuance of the office of the commissioner would not produce considerable benefit unless the government decided to exercise a real control over the "many petty tyrants, who in rapacious exercise of the delegated authority" afflict the

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26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.

subjects "with a reign of terror and extortion." (29) Macleod was succeeded by David Scott, the magistrate of Rangpur as the commissioner of Cooch Behar. Macleod, before his departure, recommended to the government for the liquidation of arrears of Cooch Behar's tribute. The amount of arrear was increasing day by day. The Raja proposed to pay off the dues by periodical instalments within three years. After that period on account of the Raja's failure, to keep his word, he would be "liable to the sequestration of the Raj in like manner as would follow his default in the fulfillment of those terms "on which he held his territory. But he would be provided with a subsistence becoming his rank and condition. (30) Based on this recommendation of Macleod, the government instructed Scott to communicate it to Harendra Narayan.

In the first week of April, 1818, Harendra Narayan, through his agent placed the request at Calcutta for the return of Dewan Guru Prasad and Ram Prasad. The government was surprised at such a request. The two officers were of notoriously bad character. Moreover, they tried to insult to Macleod and so to the government. They were privy to the murder of Harish Chakraborty. The government reminded the Raja of their letter 1816 "authorising you to administer your country through your

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

own officer and putting an end to the direct interference of the
Commissioner".⁽³¹⁾ They also permitted the Raja to "recall to
your counsels and individual of the description of Guru Prasad."
The kingly duties of "prudence, humanity and justice were incom-
patible with the restoration of such a person." Rather, the Raja
was asked to take advice from the Commissioner to manage his affairs
and fulfill his duties.⁽³²⁾

Harendra Narayan's debt to the British, in the mean-
time, amounted to 57,074-7-10-3 on account of balance of tribute
and sums advances to the Nazir. Scott did not like to recommend
any indulgence.⁽³³⁾ Harendra Narayan's position was precarious
from all corners. When Scott was going to visit Goalpara, a party
of Cooch Behar sepoys approached him at Mugalhat and requested him
ask the Raja to pay their arrear pay for two years.⁽³⁴⁾ The troops
were in a mood to revolt. They waylaid the Dewan who was coming
from Rangpur in his palanquin, but he was saved by the Daroga. When
Scott came after sometime to Dinhat, the troops approached him
again, and actually threatend to way lay the Dewan who came to visit
Scott.⁽³⁵⁾

Harendra Narayan appealed against the rebel sepoys.

31. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 26-27.

32. Ibid.

The return of Guru Prasad and Ram Prasad was in no way be
suitable for the welfare of the people of Cooch Behar. The
past experience supports this. So the British Govt. advised
Harendra Narayan to administer the country with the advice of
the commissioner appointed by the British government.

33. Ibid., p. 33, Scott to Govt. Feb. 3, 1821.

34. Ibid., pp. 36-38.

35. Ibid.

But Scott was not prepared to commit to help him "for the suppression of internal disturbances created by his own management and disregard of the advice so often given him." He told the Raja to make his own arrangement for the safety of the Dewan. Scott also as per government order of 2nd June, 1818 desisted from advising the Raja to discharge such internal debts "as the immediate payment of the whole of the arrears due to the petitions would necessarily have been followed by a similar demand on the part of the rest of the troops and this could not possibly have been satisfied without putting an entire stop to the payment of the annual tribute and arrears due to government."⁽³⁶⁾

From the beginning of this rule, Harendra Narayan could not satisfy the British government. The condition of the state remained as it was, due to the aversion of the ruler for a good government. So, the governor general, even before the death of Harendra Narayan, decided to select his successor. Prince Shibendra Narayan was the nominee of the government, whether Harendra Narayan liked it or not.

It may be said in this connection that the Anglo Cooch Behar Treaty did not clarify anything with regards to the British jurisdiction over the question of succession in Cooch Behar state. In Cooch Behar it was customary that eldest son should inherit the Raj. But Harendra Narayan's activity puzzled

the British Government. They wanted a person to the throne of Cooch Behar, who, at least should administer the state with the British advice. They wanted a friendly ruler on the throne of Cooch Behar. Scott was told not to speak it out just then. The Government's plan was secret. British intentions might be communicated in a decisive way if the commissioner should see Harendra Narayan set up any other rival of Shibendra Narayan on the throne.⁽³⁷⁾ The Governor General also asked Scott's opinion "on the expediency of requiring from Shibendra Narayan, on his succession, any stipulation calculated to improve the administration of the country or to promote other desirable objects which may not be attainable during the present Raja's rule."⁽³⁸⁾ All these activities of the government leads to the conclusion that Harendra Narayan totally disappointed the British Government. But the time was not yet ripe to take any step against the ruler of Cooch Behar. Because during this time the British government was busy in the North Eastern frontier. The Burmese became very powerful and occupied the Brahmaputra valley and established their authority over Assam. Their empire comprised Arakan and all territories bordering on Bengal to its east upto Siam. The confrontation with a powerful kingdom, expansive its nature and aggressive in intent, as the

37. Ibid., pp. 45-46, Government to Scott - 22nd October, 1824.

38. Ibid.

Burmese were, on the frontier of Bengal posed a problem of defence for the British. The governor General was quite conscious of the strategic situation of Assam and its associate kingdoms of Cachar and Jaintia which were in their turn victims of anarchy, internicine conflicts and adventurism of Manipur princes who had been expelled from their kingdom by the Burmese. The presence of the Burmese in the North East, was considered a major threat to the security of Bengal and stability of British empire. Naturally, the British government had no time to look into the affairs of Cooch Behar.

In Cooch Behar the picture was also different. Harendra Narayan wanted to pass his last days at Benaras. He desired Shibendra Narayan to accompany him to Benaras. The prince was unwilling. The Raja wanted to entrusted his second son with the management of the state during his absence. Jenkins, the Governor General's Agent to the North Eastern Frontier of India during this time, was of opinion that Shivendra Narayan, the heir apparent, should not proceed to Baneras; rather he should be given an opportunity to learn the art of government, which he will have to take charge in future. The government, also was of opinion that it would have been desirable on the part of Harendra Narayan to give Shibendra Narayan an opportunity to his business of administration. His absence from the Capital would be a opportunity for the crown prince. Though as long as

Harendra Narayan lived, Shibendra Narayan could not interfere in the management of his affairs. ⁽³⁹⁾ As Harendra Narayan became too old and he wanted to spend his last years at Baneras, the British government wanted to place Shibendra Narayan in charge of the affairs of the State. Shibendra Narayan was also the legal heir to the Raj. But a secret letter of Shibendra Narayan, ⁽⁴⁰⁾ addressed to the Governor General narrated that his father, with the advise of certain intriguing people, proposed to make over the charge of the state to one of his younger step brothers, a person totally ignorant and inexperienced in business of administration. He also wrote that his father advancing in age and suffering from ill health was not in a position to observe the intrigues of his officers. ⁽⁴¹⁾ Shibendra Narayan prayed to the Government that "your Lordship will be graciously pleaded to take my case into your deliberate consideration and issue such an order as will secure my rights to me." ⁽⁴²⁾ In spite of Government's desire, Harendra Narayan did not want to put Shibendra Narayan in charge of the business of the Raj. Jenkins informed the Government that Shibendra Narayan was present in Cooch Behar but he only conducted his usual duties of hearing civil appeals and did not interfere in any way in the management of the general affairs of the country. ⁽⁴³⁾ It was much to be regretted that this son was not

39. Ibid., p. 62.

40. Foreign consultations (Pol.) 25th March, 1834, No. 65.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Foreign consultations (Political), 19th Sept. 1836, No. 84-85.

placed in charge of affairs by the Raja, for he was popular with all class of people of Cooch Behar. (44) Jenkins apprehended that, owing to inveterate dislike of the Raja to this son, there was every doubt that the Raja, would, if possible supersede him (Shibendra Narayan) at the time of his death by his favourite son. It was customary that succession in Cooch Behar had always descended to the eldest son who as in some Hindu kingdoms, was previously appointed as Yuvaraja by the reigning Raja. The eldest son's succession, therefore, could not be all doubtful. It would lead to some disturbances if Harendra Narayan took contrary measures. (45)

Meanwhile troubles arose with regard to the payment of Raja's tribute. British government demanded interest from Harendra Narayan on his arrears. Mr. Scott, during his commissioner-ship, had in several communications to the Government, brought to notice the delays which occurred in the Raja's payments. The governor General in council had authorised Mr. Scott to require payment from the Raja of interest at 12 percent per annum upon all future arrears of tribute. (46)

Jenkins informed the government that a letter from the collector of Goalpara put the total amount of interests received upto June last, Rs. 41,939-13-10-3. (47) Harendra Narayan stated

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., 28th August, 1837, No. 72.

47. Ibid.

that the levying of interest from tributary Raja was not customary for the government and on this ground he prayed for the exemption of interests on his tribute. He also prayed to the government that the amount of interest collected from him upto that date might be credited as tribute and that if his lordship would confer this favour on him, he would be able in future to pay all his tribute within the year. (48)

Kalicharan Lahiri, the Dewan of Cooch Behar communicated to Jenkins the financial condition of the Raj and he plainly told that it was not possible for the Raja to continue the payment of his tribute unless the government was pleased to grant the remission applied for. If this be granted, he pledged himself to the punctual liquidation of the government's demands. (49)

Jenkins, to some extent, was liberal and soft in his policy towards Cooch Behar. He recommended that government should abandon interests altogether on the Raja's arrears of tribute and should give the Raja another trial and if he again failed into arrears, then interest should be demanded on the expiration of one quarter after the close of the year. (50)

At last Harendra Narayan went on Pilgrimage to Baneras (1836) Rojopakhyan (51) gives us a detailed account of

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ghosh, Joynath - op.cit. Pratyakshya Kanda.

the pilgrimage of Maharaja Harendra Narayan to Benaras. Maharani Srijukta Kasir Aye and Nageswari Aye accompanied the Maharaja with all their associates. All the officers who accompanied him always took advice from him for conducting their future business. (52) When the boat of the Maharaja arrived at Sirajganj, the Raja ordered Isan Chandra Mustafi to return to Cooch Behar to assist the two crown prince in the administration. Kashikanta Lahiri returned to the capital with the charge of Dewani Adalat. Thus after a long Journey crossing Bhagalpur, Munger, Patna, Chapra and Gazipur the Maharaja at last reached Benaras. (53) During his stay at Benaras Lord Auckland came to Benaras to observe the situation of western India. Dewan Ramchandra Lahiri went to the Governor General in the name of the Maharaja who received cordial reception from him. (54)

The arrangement which Maharaja Harendra Narayan made in the administration of the country during his absence, led to evil consequences. He appointed one of his son to the head of the Regency formed for the transaction of affairs in the interim arrangement which gave great offence to the eldest son who held only the second place in the Regency, (55) and led to constant friction between the two princes. It appeared, moreover, that even if the Regents could be induced to act together,

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Foreign consultations (Pol.) 10th October, 1838, No. 56A, para 27.

they had not really any control over the Rangpur Estates, the whole profits of which the Raja had reserved to himself. Under these circumstances captain Jenkins recommended that the government should assume the entire management of the Rangpur estates and lease them out in small farms as proposed by the Board of Revenue for short terms during the Raja's life time. Jenkins, after his visit to Cooch Behar gave a detailed account about the affair of the state. He also had written every details with regards to Cooch Behar, in his Agency Diary.⁽⁵⁶⁾ He was of opinion that the management of affairs in Cooch Behar, during the Raja's absence was much better than he had expected. Many of the petitions against the authorities were groundless or greatly exaggerated.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Jenkins had some sympathy on Shibendra Narayan. He was of opinion that the mismanagement in Cooch Behar during Harendra Narayan's absence was the legacy of the boundless extravagance of Harendra Narayan. Jenkins was of opinion that should Harendra Narayan vacate his Raj or should his death occur, there was no cause of anxiety on the part of British Government with regard to Cooch Behar. Shibendra Narayan would be the worthy successor of the ruler. The necessary reform in expenditure would be readily effected and there would be every prospect of Cooch Behar being well-governed by him.⁽⁵⁸⁾ The disposition of Kumar Shibendra

56. Foreign consultations (Pol.) 6th March, 1837, No. 71.

57. Ibid.,

58. Ibid.

Kalicharan Lahiri was Dewan for 10 years. His father and uncle, before him, held the post of Dewan or high appointments in Cooch Behar for three generations.

Narayan was very highly spoken of and though not a person of much information, he was intellegent and of steady habits and attentive to the business committed to him.

Kalicharan Lahiri was the Dewan of Cooch Behar during this time. He was a very well qualified man. He had a hereditary interest in the well being of Cooch Behar. The conduct of the Faujdari, Dewany and Revenue Departments were much the same as in British Zillahs and their management was carried on in the manner established by Bruce, Ahmuty and Commissioners of Cooch Behar during the ruler's minority and in later years by Macleod.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Harendra Narayan, in his last days wanted to construct a house at Sonarpur and also of some temple for the Lord Shiva, to commemorate his name. But before the work was complete, he died at Beneras on July, 29, 1839. His reign was the longest as well as eventful in the history of Cooch Behar. With regards to the reign of Harendra Narayan, Campbell wrote, "His (Harendra Narayan's) reign marked the transition from the old to the new system of administration, from the days of comparative darkness to the brighter ones and formed a critical epoch in the history of the state."⁽⁶⁰⁾ H. N. Choudhury, in his estimate of Harendra

59. Ibid.

60. Campbell, Glimpses of Bengal - A comprehensive, Archaeological, Biographical and Pictorial history of Bengal, Bihar and Orrisa. Vol. 1, p. 297.

Narayan also wrote ; "The rule of Maharaja Harendra Narayan marked a period of transition from the old to the new system, and forms a critical epoch in the history of the country. During this period the policy of the supreme government towards the country was finally decided upon and its formation was greatly influenced by the attitude of the ruler of the Raj." ⁽⁶¹⁾ It is true that it was in the reign of Harendra Narayan that the question whether Cooch Behar should gradually pass into a Zamindari of Bengal arose more than once, and it was greatly due to the representation of the Maharaja that the state of Cooch Behar remained a feudatory state uncontrolled in its internal administration, and having a constitution independent of foreign interference. ⁽⁶²⁾

In fact, the long reign of Harendra Narayan is a subject of much criticism to the scholars. In personal life Harendra Narayan possessed remarkable personality. He was famous for his strength. Being an accomplished horseman and rider of elephants, he was very fond of games. The Maharaja ⁽⁶³⁾ was a Skilful archer and good shot.

The name of Maharaja Harendra Narayan was famous in his days for his scholastic attainment. Being a ruler of

61. Choudhury, H. N. op.cit., p. 258.

62. Ibid.

The state of Cooch Behar, printed by Unwin Bross Ltd.
London.

63. Ibid., p. 277.

such a remote state, his scholarship was unusual. He was well versed in Persian and Bengali. His poetic genius was also not negligible. He wrote several books in verse, both original and translation. His tastes in fine arts was also of worth mentioning. The Maharaja was a skilled Musician and could appreciate the performance of the finest singers. (64)

In spite of all these outstanding qualities the private character of Harendra Narayan has been made the subject of adverse criticism. But if any one try to understand the Maharaja with all his surroundings, then it may be said that this criticism was to some extent unmerited. Maharaja Harendra Narayan was a Tantrik Hindu and a worshipper of Goddess Kali. He had followed the rituals and led a life as a tantrik Hindu lives.

As a ruler and administrator he could not be appreciated. His reign was full of chaos and confusion. This was because of a ruler of old native type, he did not much middle with the details of administration. His peculiar religious faith enjoined seclusion, and in his later years he came to be in a manner inaccessible." (65) And Evils thus crept into the government of the country. Moreover, the minority period of Harendra Narayan was under the guardianship of Maharani Kamateswari who

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid. Negi, A.K.

In projecting the character of Maharaja Harendra have carefully utilised the documents, chronicles, lett Behar State Archives. In projecting his career I have n the British materials but also used the views and comm Choudhury, an official historian of Cooch Behar State. W told about his character is nothing but the assimilation and comments of British Officials and Cooch Behar's offi In fact, Maharaja Harendra Narayan was a person of contr character. Apparently it appears that he was contradicto was not a rare specimen of pre-Colonial India. In some of of India we find such type of ruler who represented the c of Maharaja Harendra Narayan.

Although not an able administrator, Maharaja Haren possessed many rare human qualities. And it is not unlike the Colonial ruling clique had deliberately projected him inefficient ruler just to serve their own interests. But same time it is also to be mentioned that despite human q many of the Indian rulers of the Pre-Colonial times have : political sagacity, diplomatic acumen and wisdom. They c understand the writings on the wall. This was clearly exh: the conquest and annexa tion policy of the company. None c rulers survived the bania-political clique. Naturally, in of dol-drums we can not expect a better product from a Sta North-East India. Maharaja Harendra Narayan was a product

acted with the advice of notoriously ambitious Sarbananda Goswami. Naturally, the minor Raja was not properly trained with all arts of administration which was necessary for a ruler.

But the character of Harendra Narayan as an Indian Chief is of worth mentioning, "He never gave way to what was contrary to his principles, and was not afraid to run any risk to uphold his own conviction."⁽⁶⁶⁾ That is why throughout his reign he constantly opposed the introduction of British Regulations in his country. His sense of independence was great, and he was naturally very sensitive when the independence of his Raj was concerned. The picture totally changed after the demise of this feudal ruler. From this stand point his reign marked a dividing line in the history of Cooch Behar.

66. Ibid., p. 278.